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ABSTRACT

A study evaluated the use of comparability of vocational training qualifications by both employers and workers in the European Community. The appropriate equivalences (joint description and comparative survey of vocational training qualifications) had been published for 16 of a total of 19 sectors or occupational groups. All Euroadvisers (n=240) were sent a standardized questionnaire in 1993; 86 usable questionnaires were returned. (Euroadvisers are members of the European Employment Service System [EURES] network.) Usable telephone interviews with approximately 100 national coordinators were conducted. Findings indicated that national experts differed as to the level of usage of the comparability system. Counseling was primarily sought by workers, students, or institutions of vocational or further training; 49 of 90 interviewees were familiar with the system of comparability; and most interviewed experts used the publications in the Official Journal of the European Union and the information sheets on individual occupations or brochures on individual occupational fields for information about the system of comparability. About half felt that the way in which the information was available was very suitable for their guidance and placement activities. In the majority of cases, informational material was used as background material for job placement or career guidance. Direct use by workers and employers had been extremely low. Workers and employers were most interested in information about certificates and practical occupational requirements. (YLB)

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Use of the system of comparability of vocational training qualifications by employers and workers

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Use of the system of comparability of vocational training qualifications by employers and workers

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Saarbrücken, Brussels, Potsdam

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FOREWORD BY THE COMMISSIONING BODY

In agreement with the European Commission, CEDEFOP commissioned the ISOPLAN institute in mid-1993 to investigate the effective use of the "comparability of vocational training qualifications" system which had been coordinated by CEDEFOP from 1986 to 1993 on the basis of Council ruling 368/85/EEC and under the charge of the Human Resources, Education, Vocational Training and Youth task force (department of the European Commission).

This investigation was to supplement the evaluation undertaken by the Member States and the Commission in the course of 1991 and if need be to update it, in particular in view of the fact that at the time

a) results were only available on a limited number of vocational groups, i.e. 8 of the 19 sectors which were covered by the end of 1993, and

b) questioning of the direct users, i.e. of enterprises and workers, had only been possible in part in certain individual cases.

Furthermore it was still rather early for the system and its scope to be very well known, especially since most of the Member States did not start making the effort to find out themselves about the system and its results until 1991.

Due to its privilege of access to the Euroadvisers in the employment services in all the Member States, the company commissioned with the investigation carried out its survey, and in a number of cases were able to get in touch directly with workers and enterprises via precisely these contacts, in a comparatively short time - in just 6 months. Associations and competent offices were also questioned a second time, with regard to possible changes of opinion or experience in comparison with 1991.

Even if the investigation was not able to present empirically and representatively guaranteed results on the initial question, it can still be regarded as an important contribution to the discussion and can support the participants in their own considerations. At the time the usefulness of the system as an experts' system on the one hand and in connection with the mobility and freedom of movement of workers on the other was emphasized, and it is largely confirmed by the present investigation.

Its direct use as a means of information for individual workers and enterprises who are not especially interested in mobility is still limited, however. On this point the reservations expressed in the evaluation in 1991 have been confirmed. Only in individual Member States is there a rising tendency to use the system: in the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom. In the other countries its usage is either stagnating or has even come to a complete standstill: in Denmark, Luxemburg, France, Ireland, whereby the reasons for this are still unclear. One question which remains open, for example, is whether this could be due to the sluggishness with which those responsible in the corresponding Member States have been making information available. In Greece, for instance, there seems to have been no effort made at all to this effect, although the 1985 ruling is compulsory for all Member States.

However, in view of the scale of the problems on the labour market in nearly all the Member States up to now and the worsening of the situation at present, and in view of the subsequent increasing protectionistic behaviour on the part of many of the Member States concerned, a European system which aims at the mobility of workers and in the final event at their equal treatment in access to their profession and to further training runs the risk of becoming a disruptive factor for the fixed behaviour and opinions of enterprises and workers. If there were full employment and more advanced European political, economic and social integration, it would surely be regarded in a completely different light.

It is often difficult for individual workers to put their qualifications to advantage even in their own countries; in many Member States their comparability and transferability is often only partially guaranteed. In such a situation wanting to make headway at European level can mean challenging the national systems. This is probably a major reason for the fact that many of those responsible, and especially those concerned with the labour market and with the authorities dealing with vocational training, are either sceptical towards the system or would even like it to be stopped.

The system's weak points have repeatedly been made clear, but with some good will on the part of all concerned they could be removed or at least reduced. In any case supplementary systems are necessary as well. A number of very promising experiments are already in process, concerning for example the portfolio, an individual letter of qualification, and in the medium term the networking of data bases in the field of qualifications, which would allow even the direct users to be presented constantly updated background information on the qualifications available on the labour market and attained in the training system.

In the meantime it is satisfactory to note that in the face of the challenges posed by increasing European integration (e.g. Single Market and European Union), the work on the comparability system and on its results has played a major role in opening the eyes of most of the Member States with regard to existing deficiencies in the quality and quantity of training opportunities for the corresponding target group of skilled workers and employees. Many Member States have taken the steps appropriate in their own cases and are renewing or extending their palettes of qualification for skilled workers, both in primary and further training.

The system is worth further development, and after being examined, and together with the appropriate bodies in the Member States and with the social partners, being used as an experts' information system for other professional groups or sectors requesting it. It is the only real system of comparison of qualifications which despite all criticism has proved its workability in detail up to now. For this, however, it has required and continues to require the willingness to cooperate and the good will of all concerned. Once the political handicaps have been made clear and binding and are not constantly being watered down by changing priorities, then the experts will be able to come to agreements.

Berlin, January 1994

Burkart Sellin (Project Coordinator at CEDEFOP)

FOREWORD BY THE INSTITUTE COMMISSIONED

The report presented hereafter of a study commissioned by CEDEFOP to the Isoplan Institute concerning the use of the "System of comparability of vocational training qualifications" must be classified correctly in order to dispel misunderstandings.

The study does not claim to be an extensive evaluation of the system of comparability. Both out of time and budget considerations the aim was to have an empirically extensive evaluation. From this point of view the study represents a topic of discussion, in which selected aspects of the evaluation of the use of the system are elucidated: by experts, by employees of the national labour administrations of the member states, but not by the targeted users themselves: employees and enterprises.

Irrespective of this the submitted statements and results of surveys permit a first comprehensive evaluation of the system by the expert institution, raising once again the question as to its true function. We should like to take this opportunity of thanking those experts and institutes, who have participated in the tedious procedure of the survey.

Saarbrücken/Brussels - December 1993

Dr. M. Werth

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1 Aim and method of study

1.1 Background and objective

The aim of the present study is to take initial stock of and evaluate the use of the comparability of vocational training qualifications by both employers and workers.

At this stage another description of the system of comparability is superfluous.[1] However, for an initial evaluation, even if it is preliminary and by all means open for improvement as far as the method is concerned, it is essential to re-examine the original aims of such a system.

The aims of a system of comparability are as follows, as detailed in the relevant documentation by CEDEFOP (cf. also the Council decision dated 16th July, 1985, EC Journal no. L 199/56):

- to contribute to the creation of a labour market for skilled workers and the free movement of such labour within Europe, which is becoming closer;

- to enable workers, i.e. a current and future specialized labour force, to apply their qualifications gained in another EC member state better, both with regard to their potential applications with companies and also with regard to issues of adequate classification or personnel developments;

- to facilitate matters for companies and employers in their search for suitable specialized labour and to advertise vacancies throughout Europe if need be.

(Cf. CEDEFOP document, the EC project "Equivalences in vocational training qualifications, ..." Berlin 1991, p. 1).

After elaborating and publishing to date the appropriate equivalences (joint description and comparative survey of vocational training qualifications) for 16 of a total of 19 sectors or occupational groups respectively (= 209 professions on skilled worker/employee level)[2], the following is to be checked in the study by suitable empirical enquiries:

a) to what extent the system has been used up to now by employers and by workers and

b) to what degree it is suitable for achieving the above mentioned goals in its present form.

The aim is not a final empirical and representative evaluation of the overall use of the system, but rather a well-founded statement concerning the usage by the two central target groups[3].

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1 Cf. CEDEFOP Manual 1992.

2 Cf. also List of EC Professional Profiles published by CEDEFOP in the form of a diskette.

3 "In view of the aim of the system the results of the work on comparability of vocational training qualifications can be used especially by employers, workers and employment institutions. By their contents this information is, however, also of use for all involved in vocational training (individual state authorities, institutes and promotional bodies for professional further

1.2 Method

Considering the relatively limited financial resources the study had to be limited to:

a) an evaluation of the existing secondary material;

b) implementation of a written survey of the included advisory and co-ordinatory bodies in the member states of the Community;

c) implementation of selected (telephone) interviews with experts.

Under methodical points of view, this limitation must proceed the following report and the interim results presented here must, therefore, be interpreted with great care: in principle this is an **indirect approach** to evaluation, which does not represent the **users** of the system actually targeted, i.e. workers and employers, but centres on selected **expert opinions** on the usage to date. However, the approach is legitimate and in our opinion productive. Moreover, an even approximately representative survey of workers and employers in all 12 member states would only involve enormous financial expenditure.

In actual fact the results presented hereafter are thus essentially based on three sources of information or empirical enquiries respectively, the contents of which were finalized with CEDEFOP or the Task Force:

1) The **evaluation** and **updating** of the national reports on the evaluation of the system presented by the member states in 1991.

   To this end Isoplan requested all national co-ordinators and included institutes to submit a **written statement** to the effect if any new realizations had come to light since the reports at that time with regard to the distribution and usage of the system of comparability on a national, regional and local level.

   National co-ordinators who had not submitted any written statements were telephoned by Isoplan and asked for their opinions.

2) **Written survey** of the members of the **EURES Network**, i.e. of Euroadvisers, in all member states of the Community, who could be assumed to be acquainted with the system or could pass judgement on its degree of acquaintance and use by the actual target group, i.e. workers and employers.

   By selecting Euroadvisers from all member states of the EU as the target group of the survey 'practicians' of occupational guidance and placement services could voice their opinions based on their direct experience with respect to the need of workers and interested enterprises for information.[4]

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education) and also for careers guidance bodies and members of the professional groups of the sectors involved." (cf. TFRH, Manual 1992, p. 10)

4 At present, the EURES network comprises approximately 240 Euro-Advisers (most of whom are employed with national employment services, trade unions or other organisations.)

3) Supplementary **telephone expert interviews** with employees of selected advisory and job finding bodies in so far as these are named by the co-ordinators of the further resource persons mentioned in 1).

1.3 Status of enquiries

As had been planned, all Euroadvisers (n = 240) were sent a **standardized questionnaire** in the second half of 1993, which had been developed in coordination with Cedefop.[5] By the end of November 86 evaluable questionnaires had been returned.

Further information relating to the use of the system of comparability could be gathered from written surveys and telephone interviews of the national co-ordinators. In spite of several attempts, no statements had been received from the French, Greek and Portuguese experts when this report was drawn up. In this respect, the national evaluation reports (with the exception of Portugal) drawn up in 1991/92 have to be included.

Alltogether, the usable sources are as follows:

5 Questionnaire cf. Appendix (the form was available in English, French and German)

Country	Evaluation report		Comment		Quantity of question-naires
	available	open	available	open	
B	X		X		14
DK	X		X		4
D	X		X		22
GR	X			X	2
E	X		X		10
F	X			X	10
IRL	X			X	6
I	X		X		8
L	X			X	3
NL	X			X	2
P		X		X	2
UK	X		X		3
Sum					86
EFTA					4
Total			9		90

The number of usable interviews amounts to approximately 100, i.e. a total number, which by all means provides a relatively sure basis for an evaluation of the use of the system of comparability, considering the fact that these are statements by experts.

2 Usage and Function of the System of Comparability

2.1 Update of national evaluation reports (Results of expert surveys)

On the basis of the resolution of the Council dated 18.12.1990 (ABl EC 91/C109/01) the member states undertook to compile reports concerning the concrete use of a system of comparability by the end of 1991 and to perform an evaluation by the practical users and potential users and to make suggestions for improvement.

The individual national reports were presented to Isoplan (with the exception of Portugal), as was the summary of the evaluation reports (working document of the Commission dated 26.10.1992).

The reports observe the uniform structure with statements on:

a) information; level, instruments and features;
b) use of working results on national, regional and local level;
c) evaluation and suggestions.

When interpreting the reports presented in 1991/92 it must be considered that the system of comparability at that time (a) was not completely worked out and (b) experience with regard to its use by workers, employers and other groups could only exist to a lesser extent.

With this in mind the complete evaluation was rather restrained and in some individual reports was even sceptical to negative.

The following **aspects** are received **positively** in almost all reports:

"- the sessions of the experts and also of the national co-ordinators give greater, mutual insight on the qualification systems, they support mutual exchange for a conception of joint vocational training modules and they expand knowledge of different ways of qualifying for the same profession in the various member states;

- the European character of the work is favourable for an increasing awareness for the ever increasing significance, which a joint dimension of vocational qualifications has for mobility and employment;

- the close inclusion of the social partners involved in performing the work has very positive effects (social dialogue, exchange of experience, ...);

- a major enrichment is the emergence of a joint vocabulary and terminology in the relevant area."

At the same time the resuming report of the Commission, however, also points out the **"limits inherent to the system"** of comparability, (ibid. p. 9) in particular

- the **limitation of the system** to workers on a **skilled worker level** (geographic mobility is however much more apparent in higher levels of qualification);

- the method determined by the resolution in 1985 permits neither a consideration of **competence**, which is gained especially in the course of **vocational experience and further education**, nor does it take into consideration permanent developments specific to the place of work;

- the **"products"** of the system (description of the practical occupational requirements and comparable surveys concerning diplomas and certificates) **do not entirely comply with the requirements stated by employees and companies;** they are **unclear and not easy to use**; however it is important to point out especially that the description of the practical occupational requirements is incomplete and couched in too restrictive terms and that it does not conform with the practical requirements of the labour market (ibid. p. 9).

To judge the use of the system it is stated in the resuming report presented in 1992[6]:

"Admittedly the **documents** and sources of information available to the potential users (workers, companies, trainers, careers advisers, students, etc.) are only consulted **to a limited extent.**" (ibid. p. 12)

"Those groups directly affected by mobility (migrant workers or companies active multinationally and/or internationally) **scarcely use** this information in all countries."

Apart from a marked interest by research institutes and students - as said in the evaluation report at that time - the practical use of the system of comparability thus remained small. Regionally, an exception was found in the United Kingdom, in certain sectors the professional groups with a very high mobility (hotel and catering) logged by the system.

The reasons for the markedly small degree of use of the system by the actual target group, workers and employers, up to 1991/92, according to the resuming evaluation could be seen particularly in the fact that

"in almost all instances **"comparability"** is confused with **"recognition"** of qualifications and that interest is centred much more on this latter area.

Furthermore the documents published in the Journal of the European Communities (surveys and profiles) are **difficult to use** due to their complexity and access to these, which is not easy. As a result the type of information offered by the system of comparability of vocational qualifications is in general not accessible to lower qualified migrant wordkers." (ibid. p. 12)

The question to what extent this low degree of use determined in 1991/92 has changed significantly in the meantime cannot be answered at this stage on the basis of the statements provided, however as a tendency everything signifies that little has changed to date despite increased endeavours for information, i.e.

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6 Cf. CEDEFOP (ed.), Conference report of the expert meeting on the EC comparability of vocational training qualifications, 1-2 October 1991, Nuremberg

- the **direct level of usage** by workers and companies is, apart from some exceptions, low;

- the **indirect use**, i.e. utilization of the system by experts and also by careers advisers and vocational advisers, researchers, students and other institutions must in comparison be evaluated more highly.

Nevertheless, the statements of the national experts interviewed as to the level of usage and the continuation of the system differ. The statements made include:

Belgium

Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap

"1. Comparability of Vocational Training Qualifications is used by the following Official Institutions:

   - Flemish Department of Education
   - Belgian Ministry of Employment
   - Ministry of the Flemish Community (Administration, Employment and European Social Service)
   - Several Employers Organisations
   - Employees Organisations
   - Flemish Institution for Independant Enterprises.

2. Other Institutions:

   - Psycho-Medico-Social Centres (Guidance Centres)
   - University Research Teams
   - Flanders Social Economic Council

3. The use of the Comparability is still increasing.

4. Continuation of the Comparability for level 3-4-5 should be useful, starting with level 3. Especially for the paramedical sector, aesthetics, haircutting.
   The reason for continuing with level 3 is that several occupations were postponed in level 2 be discussed in level 3."

Denmark

Ministry of Education and Research

"The project has been useful in creating trans-European contacts inside the different trades, but it has not been contributing as much to the mobility of workers as intended - partly due to the general recession on the labour market and partly due to the static nature of the information gathered.

For instance the Danish system of vocational education and training has been transformed in the meantime, so that a lot of the information gathered is obsolete. The fact that the system is very heavy and difficult to update, also in the case of factual errors, makes it unreliable.

The project has not been published in Denmark apart from the official journal of the European Communities. The small CEDEFOP manual has been widely distributed to schools and job centres and organizations on the labour market, but we have received very few enquiries and they have been referred to the official journal.

The social partners have not been sufficiently interested in the project to be willing to co-finance a publication.

We consider that the CEDEFOP has done a very competent job and that they have carried out the decision of the Council of Ministers as they were asked to. Experience shows, however, that the whole concept was very operative. It has led to very static descriptions whereas qualification needs are very flexible in a time of constant change on the labour market due to new technologies, new organization of work, etc.; training measures must accordingly be equally flexible in order to cater for these needs.

The experience gathered through this project has led us to the conclusion a formalized system of comparability or recognition will be too rigid to cater for a labour market in constant change.

We think that the only way to facilitate mobility is to let the individual be carrier of information about his own qualifications, i.e. documentation in foreign languages about formal qualifications/education and training certificates, about the national education system supplemented by an individual C.V. (portfolio)."

Germany

Bundesministerium für Bildung und Wissenschaft

"In the past two years no information has come to my attention, which would give rise to relativize the evaluations of the process of comparability contained in the German national report dated end of 1991. According to this the process of comparability was assigned relatively little significance for promoting mobility of workers, in particular because it cannot fulfil the actual qualification profile of an applicant and in this respect does not make a great contribution to the information of a potential employer. On the contrary the possible exchange of experience concerning vocational training specific to certain branches in the international experts' sessions in the member states was greeted as being very useful by the professional associations and the trade unions."

Bundesanstalt für Arbeit

The most comprehensive method to evaluate the level of usage of the system of comparability was certainly applied by the Bundesanstalt für Arbeit (Federal Labour Office). In autumn 1993, 3,500 questionnaires produced by Isoplan were sent to BA staff. 1,407 forms were returned. The results of the survey are shown in the appendix of this report.[7]

The most important results can be summarized as follows:

1. In 46,593 consultation cases, 626 brochures on the system of comparability were handed out. Thus, the level of usage is extremely low.

2. Most of the enquiries were made by school-leavers qualified to enter higher education, by students and by university graduates. With the exception of employment offices in border areas, skilled workers seem to show little interest in mobility.

3. With respect to the 19 occupational sectors covered by the system of comparability enquiries centre on sectors such as hotel and catering, electrical/electronics, tourism, office administration and commerce.

4. As to the contents, enquiring workers seem to be primarily interested in the kind and level of certificate and in the respective training.

   Further enquiries relating to information material which was insufficient or not available at all in the employment offices refer primarily to addresses and contact persons in another country (job placement, offices for the allocation of subsidies, certifying agencies) and to information on the labour market situation and on salaries and wages in another country. These issues do not refer to the system of comparability but to the EURES-network of Euroadvisers which is being developed.

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7 Cf. Appendix and IWD Nr.48, 8 December 1993

Kuratorium der deutschen Wirtschaft für Berufsbildung

"As an institution run jointly by the central associations of the employers' organisations the Kuratorium has not gathered any direct information with respect to the familiarity with and the use of the system of comparability by the companies.

...

...As we have not received any information about any plans to supplement or update the national reports our evaluation of the system cannot change. In particular, there are no indications in favour of an expansion of the system of comparability to include further levels."

Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund

"No enquiries were directed to us from the area of vocational training practice in enterprises and vocational schools. Those few, who are interested in a process of comparability, have been to date exclusively students and academic institutes." (statement from 1991)

"At present, no further qualification levels are to be included in the system of comparability. Transparency in the field of qualification can also be ensured by the Portfolio/Qualification Handbook." (statement from 1993)

Deutsche Angestelltengewerkschaft

"We can inform you that we assume that the system of comparability
will not be continued and that an evaluation does not seem to be useful at present."

Greece

(Statement 1993 has not yet been received)

"It is generally felt that the work done on the comparability of vocational qualification at European level has made only a very slight contribution to achieving the objectives referred to, and no differences are observed in the various sectors of application."(1991)

Spain

Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social

"The general attitude in Spain has not changed significantly.
In addition, I should like to inform you that in Spain a major review of the educational and training system is under way. The results will be directly included in the future systems of comparability of vocational training qualifications."

Subdirección General de Formatión Profesional ocupational

"1. Have you received any information relating to the use of the system by employers and workers?

- The system is not used very much.
- There is little interest in using the system, in particular among the 'less qualified workers'. This is partly due to the low emigration rate.
- Based on the present acceptance of the system its use would be higher at the level of higher qualified occupations (intermediate and higher school leaving certificates and 'regulated occupations').

2. Is there a more recent evaluation report?

   No.

3. Do you think that the system of comparability should be continued or discontinued?

   The system should be continued on condition that some changes are carried out to make it a more effective and user-friendly system in practice. The final aim of the system of comparability would be to inform about national qualifications and to give assistance in achieving mobility and in concluding contracts.

   If it is to be continued: What further occupational levels should be included in the system of comparability?

   The occupational groups listed in levels 2 and 3, i.e. skilled workers, salespersons, administrative personnel, hotel staff as well as persons rendering services for firms, transport, etc.

4. What other institutions/persons might be able to give any further information?

   INEM, a mediation board of the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs, runs a national distribution network covering provincial directorates, employment offices, their own centres and staff who were sent the questionnaire for further completion of the enqiry.

In addition, INEM sent the questionnaire to several organisations representative in this matter for their answers might be useful. They are as follows: employers' association (CEOE) and trade unions: Comisiones Obreras (CC.OO), Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT), Confederatión Sindical EUZKO Languilén, Alkartasuna/Solidaridad de Trabajadores Vascos (ELA-STV)."

ELA - Solidaridad de Trabajadores Vascos
(Trade Union of Basque Workers)

"1. The employers are not at all interested in the system of comparability of vocational training qualifications. This applies in particular to private enterprises which have never cared a lot for diplomas and which regard it as mere theory which has nothing to do with their work.

   By contrast, the workers show some interest in the possibility to use their vocational training qualifications not only in Spain but also in the other member states. In our area, nowever, where there are primarily smaller enterprises only the academics are generally informed about the preconditions on which this system is based. Skilled workers of a lower level are not informed about the work that has been carried out.

2. We note a certain disillusionment resulting from the slow and inefficient process of operations to date. In addition, we are facing the problem that there is no internal system of comparability. Many vocational training courses are not officially recognized in the attempt to develop some mandatory leaving certificates.

3. It is of no use to continue the system in its present form because it is too slow and expensive and because it does not fulfil its original purpose. It would be better to draw up a dynamic and decentralized system by starting with some similar occupations and by setting up some larger occupational sectors without going too much into details.

   There are many private initiatives for exchange which will contribute to an official recognition of systems which have been ignored as yet because of the existing centralism, the rigid system and a lack of coordination."

CEOE - Confederación Espanola de Organizaciones Empesariales

"With regard to the questionnaire I can inform you that we have come to the conclusion:

- that the system is not much used;
- that there is no tendency for an increasing use of the system;
- that we have no new evaluation data;
- that a continuation would be useful if a solution can be found to the problems which have made it so inefficient."

France

Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Formation Professionnelle

"This work reminds us of a Sisyphean task...

All social partners voice some strong criticism on this point. They talk of 'waste'.

The first effects which had been expected (exchange of views between professionals and trainers, social dialogue) are important and positive (report 1991)

The system is scarcely used...it should be discontinued."(statement 1993)

Ireland

Department of Enterprise and Employment/FAS

In a telepone interview FAS informed us that there is little demand for the system, with the exception of some occupational groups (Horeca and construction). According to the Ministry it becomes increasingly difficult to justify the high costs.

"Information on the comparability procedure has been widely circulated, with the objective of its reaching everybody who is potentially interested in it. Furthermore, the circulation of information is kept under regular review and any new areas identified as potentially having an interest in this subject are supplied with the available information. ...

...Despite the considerable effort which has been put into promoting the availability of this information, the level of interest shown by all potential users is disappointingly low.

A survey of several FAS employment offices was carried out in an effort to determine the level of usage to which prospective emigrants were making of the material available. The size of the survey was at least adequate enough to reflect the level of usage in the entire country. Its results were disappointing." (report 1991)

Italy

Ministerio del Lavoro

"In Italy no survey was carried out because the system does not comply with the true needs of the Italian market.

The system is too slow and its goals have not been reached.

Other occupational fields should have been included (such as those relating to 'new technologies': computer science, electronics, etc., i.e. occupations allowing a certain freedom of movement of workers.)

For these reasons, Italy decided not to carry out another survey."

Luxemburg

Service Formation Professionnelle

According to the SFP the system has hardly ever been used in Luxemburg. Therefore it is urgently recommended to discontinue it. Luxemburg is also very sceptical about the introduction of a portfolio unless it will be obligatory. This is why the statement made in the evaluation report of 1991 was reconfirmed.

"We would have expected that, with a concentration of foreign workers, which is unique in the Community, the population and the employers would show a great interest in the sources of information made available.
Unfortunately this was not the case."(report 1991)

The Netherlands

COLO

In the Netherlands, the national co-ordinators had a more positive view of the degree of usage. According to a telephone statement there are no concrete figures about the application of the system but more than 50% of the Dutch employment offices use the material for their work. According to the COLO representative an expansion of the system would therefore be desirable.

The users of the system are primarily counselling and training institutions (63%) and enquiring workers.

"A preliminary study about enquiries to COLO for information reveals that more than 50% of these enquiries come from intermediate organisations such as employers' and employees' associations, information centres, etc.

In addition, there is a relatively large interest of private persons. They are either workers looking for a job in another country or foreigners working in the Netherlands who wish to get more information about the comparability of their qualifications." (report 1991)

Portugal

(no statement has been received as yet)

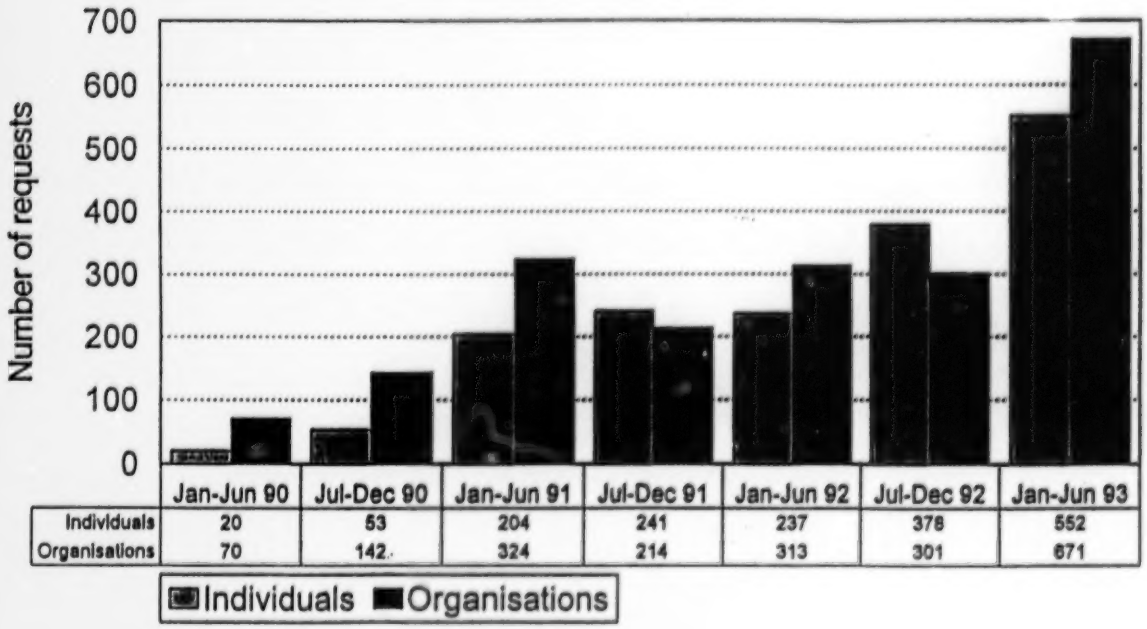
United Kingdom

Employment Department

In view of the reserved to negative attitude by the majority of statements received to date the **Employment Department** (UK) points out an increasing number of enquiries: "the work has increased dramatically in the first half of this year". In an Executive Summary Update comprising 9 pages, in addition suggestions are made as to how to improve the system of comparability.[8]

COMPARABILITY OF VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

ENQUIRIES FROM INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS
BETWEEN JANUARY 1990 AND JUNE 1993



	Jan-Jun 90	Jul-Dec 90	Jan-Jun 91	Jul-Dec 91	Jan-Jun 92	Jul-Dec 92	Jan-Jun 93
Individuals	20	53	204	241	237	378	552
Organisations	70	142	324	214	313	301	671

Quelle: Employment Department 1993

8 Cf. Appendix

Evaluation reports of the member states on the system of comparability:

Summary and update by isoplan 1993

Country	Information (Evaluation)	Use of system by workers and employers Evaluation 1991	Evaluation 10/1993
B (Flanders)	Relatively extensive information materials, use of extensive distribution channels, information for certain target groups prepared	Use by institutions and associatons, especially workers' and employers' organizations, problems with comprehension by end addressee (worker)	Increasing use Work should be continued by concentrating on some main areas
DK	Main information channels - Official Journal - CEDEFOP brochures	Information of workers considered as needing improvement Due to low demand information supply is regarded as sufficient	Discontinuation recommended Referral to portfolio
D	Relatively wide scattering of information including specific BA brochures, diffentiation too low	Scarcely a demand by "end consumers" Diminishing interest of employers' and workers' organizations	Discontinuation recommended Referral to portfolio
GR	Merely press articles, otherwise very limited distribution of information	No indications for use available. Low acceptance of information by employers' and workers' associations	open

State: 12/93

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Evaluation reports of the member states on the system of comparability:

Summary and update by isoplan 1993

Country	Information (Evaluation)	Use of system by workers and employers Evaluation 1991	Bewertung 10/1993
E	Relatively extensive information in differentiated form and in part large numbers, information for specific target groups, however, distribution system still selective	Relatively wide usage by employers' and workers' institutions (associations' own publications, brochures, seminars, etc.) continuous update, equally high interest of associations large number of brochures for "end consumers"	Low level of usage Continuation and update recommended in modified form
F	Relatively wide range of information, information for specific target groups, however partly out of date	As a result of low mobility no notable demand by employers' and workers' associations (merely in frontier areas) information systems are regarded as cumbersome and slow	open
IRL	Wide scattering of information to specific target groups. Information considered to be up to date	Employers' and workers' associations are entirely satisfied with the information (manual), yet low acceptance rate and low level of interest by end addressees (workers)	Low demand Cost-benefit ratio questionable
I	As a result of the high level of regionalization there is no harmonization of the various sources of information, no resonance with target groups	To date merely information offers in the form of surveys. Extremely low use by employers' and workers' associations. If available information requirements mainly come from the regions	Low demand Discontinuation recommended

State: 12/93

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Evaluation reports of the member states on the system of comparability:

Summary and update by isoplan 1993

Country	Information (Evaluation)	Use of system by workers and employers Evaluation 1991	Bewertung 10/1993
L	Information only via chambers and labour administration, distribution channels - press work - brochures	Workers' representations have not been included in the distribution network to date. Extremely low use by employers' representations. Systems are regarded for Luxemburg as being frequently out of date and in general superfluous.	No demand at all Discontinuation recommended
NL	Wide range of information, distribution via national organizations and press work, address of target groups	Wide acceptance by employers' and workers' associations, which use existing distribution channels; high importance of individual inquiries, more swift update of systems is desirable	Satisfactory level of usage Expansion desirable
P	——	——	open
UK	Very wide range of information and target groups oriented distribution channels, including TV; in part swift update of information	Relatively high level of acceptance of systems by workers' and employers' representations, increasing number of individual inquiries by employers' associations for improved usage of the system	Steep rise in use; recommendations for improvements have been received

2.2 Results of the written survey of Euroadvisers

As explained at the beginning, the empirical basis for the present report was a survey of the national co-ordinators and experts designated by them. In addition, there was a written survey of the **Euroadvisers** who are already involved in the EURES (European Employment Services) Network or who are taking part in the EUROTRAIN programme run by Isoplan. In general these are employees of the national labour administrations, partly also trade unions, in all member states of the EC (in total at present approximately 240 persons). For financial reasons, the survey was limited to the Euroadviser network in agreement with CEDEFOP, which is certainly also a limitation of the relevance of the stated expertise: it can indeed be assumed that a high number of Euro Advisers are acquainted with the subject of the system of comparability in the course of their work and without a doubt all have wide experience in counselling workers seeking to migrate or companies seeking advice. Depending on the size and degree of organization of the institutes included their activity is, however, concentrated exclusively on questions of arranging **employment and advice**, i.e. the area of careers guidance was excluded from the survey to a large extent. In addition it would of course be necessary within the framework of a more comprehensive evaluation also to include in the examination personnel managers of companies, the relevant employers' and workers' associations and not least of all a carefully selected random sample of workers seeking advice themselves.

Nevertheless, the results of the survey of a part group of person involved, the Euro Advisers, also give a series of interesting conclusions on the issue of degree of acquaintance and utilization of the system.

The questionnaires sent to the Euro Advisers essentially comprise the following subject complexes.[9]

1. **General section**

   - areas of responsibility of institution/person interviewed
   - target groups of counselling/placement
   - number of cases of counselling/placement abroad

2. **Utilization of the system of comparability**

   - degree of acquaintance
   - evaluation of contents/form
   - frequency of utilization
   - sectoral utilization
   - main emphasis of utilization from contents
   - aims of information inquiry by workers and employers

9 Cf. Appendix

3. Evaluation of the system of comparability

- suitability
- detail
- correctness
- current relevance
- need for expansion

As has been mentioned before, activities of the interviewed Euroadvisers centre on vocational guidance and job placement (38.5% of answers). The field of careers guidance and counselling in vocational training and further training which is also important for an evaluation of the use of the system of comparability is covered by the experts because (contrary to the strict separation of these two areas in Germany) the tasks of the Euroadvisers are much broader defined than in other EC countries.

Question 1
Which are the main areas of activity of your institution?

Area	absolute*)	%
1 Vocational guidance/placement voc.	67	38,5
2 Careers-guidance	36	20,7
3 Voc. Training/Further training	39	22,4
4 Others	32	18,4
Sum	174	100,0

*) Several answers possible

In the majority of (indirectly) registered cases, counselling is primarily sought by **workers, students and pupils** or by institutions of vocational training or further training but to a very low degree (25% of answers) by interested companies or potential employers.

Question 2
Which are the target-groups concerned by your counselling- and placement activities?

Target-group	absolute*)	%
1 Workers	82	35,3
2 Employers	57	24,6
3 Institutions for voc. and further training	29	12,5
4 University students, pupils, trainees	42	19,1
5 Others	22	9,5
Sum	232	100,0

*) Several answers possible

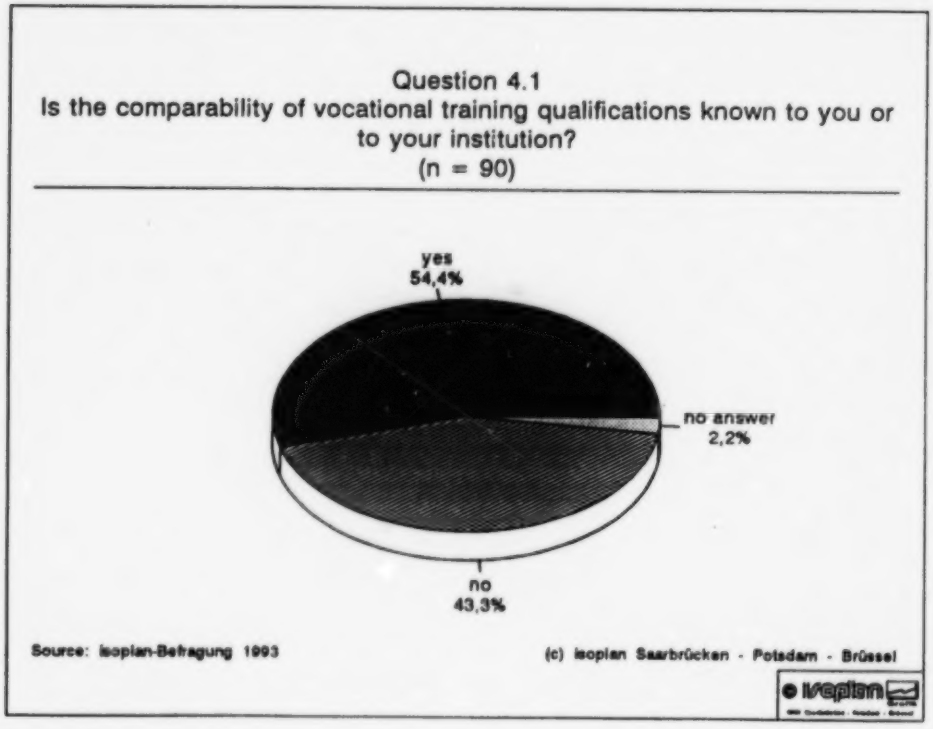
One aspect, which needs to be taken into consideration, is that both the system of comparability and the Euro-Adviser network are still relatively young or in their initial stage so that experiences with this system are limited. However, the interest shown by Euroadvisers in the context of the Isoplan EUROTRAIN seminars and the number of enquiries about the diskette available since mid-1993 indicates that the system is rated highly as an aid in counselling.

Despite the relatively bad initial position the **familiarity** of the interviewed experts with the system of comparability is relatively high. 49 out of 90 persons interviewed (86 plus 4 experts from EFTA countries), i.e. 54% declared that they know the system.

Question 4.1
Is the comparability of vocational training qualifications known to you or to your institution?

	ja yes oui	nein no non	keine Antwort no answer pas de répon.	Summe Total Totale
B	4	10		14
DK	3	1		4
D	16	6		22
GR	1	1		2
E	9	1		10
F	2	7	1	10
IRL	5	1		6
I	4	4		8
L		3		3
NL	1	1		2
P		1	1	2
UK	2	1		3
non EC-countries*	2	2		4
Total	*49*	*39*	*2*	*90*

* Austria (2), Sweden (1), Finland (1)



Information material about the system of comparability available to the interviewed experts differs. Most of them use

- the publications in the Official Journal of the European Union and
- the information sheets on individual occupations or brochures on individual occupational fields.

Question 4.2
What kind of information material do you have on the comparability of voc. training qualifications?

Medium		absolute*)
1	Official journal of the EC	23
2	Information sheets for each job	17
3	Formal, polyglot information sheets	12
4	Brochures for each of the 19 occup. fields	16
5	Others	9
6	Missing	6
7	No reply	2
Sum		59

*) Several answers possible

As has been mentioned before, the system of comparability has been dealt with as a seminar topic in the framework of the basic training scheme for Euroadvisers run by Isoplan since 1992 on behalf of Directorate General V. In the course of the seminar further information material was handed out.

The experts differ in their **evaluation of the presentation** of the system of comparability. Approximately half of the advisers who know and/or use the system feel that its presentation is "very good or good" whereas another half of those interviewed believe that it is "poor" or "not suitable".

The reasons given by the experts differ greatly. Most of them wish to have a "simpler and tighter form", other criticize a "lack of transparency" and a lack of indications relating to experiences gained on the job.

Question 5:
Is the way in which the information is available, suitable for your guidance and placement activities?

Suitability		absolute	
1	very good	3	19
2	good	16	
3	moderate	14	18
4	insufficiant	4	
5	no reply	10	
Sum		47	

An interesting recommendation was made to publish special **information brochures on the relevant occupational fields in border areas**, making it possible to have a direct and demand-orientated comparison of the countries concerned.

Irrespective of the detailed criticism one of the major results of the enquiry is that in the absolute majority of cases information material about the system of comparability is used as **background material for job placement or careers guidance** (49 out of 78 cases, i.e. 63%). Only in a few cases has the material been handed out to enquiring workers or employers.

Question 6/7
How do you employ the information materials on the comparability of vocational training qualifications within your institution?

Utilization for		absolute
1	back-ground information for the voc. guidance/placements	28
2	careers guidance	21
3	hand-out material for job-seekers (workers)	8
4	hand-out material for those who offer jobs (employers)	8
5	hand-out material for other institutions	5
5	no reply	9
Sum		78

According to the experts interviewed the **direct use of the system by workers and employers** as the central question of this study has been **extremely low** as yet.

However, this does not answer the question as to the essential contribution of the system to the transparency of vocational training qualifications and thus to an improved mobility of workers in the Community.

There are many different **requests for counselling**, requiring the use of the **system of comparability** as an **information source for Euroadvisers**:

- As was expected, **workers** wished to get some information about an application in another country or they have some more general questions with respect to vocational training and further training abroad.

- When counselling **employers**, Euroadvisers use the system of comparability to look for skilled personnel or to phrase a vacancy.

Question 11
In which relationship and to which use do the employers and workers ask for information material about the comparability for vocational guidance in the first line?

a)	Workers	absolute
1	job-seeking abroad	24
2	training courses/further training abroad	12
3	salary negociations with foreign employers	4
4	negociations to define occupational levels within the enterprise	5
5	for general information	16
6	others	2
7	no reply	16
Sum		79

b)	Employers	absolute
1	research for skilled workers coming from EC member states/ defining of job-offers throughout the EC	11
2	recruitment in enterprises abroad/to make job-offers in the country concerned	10
3	to compare the qualifications of job-seekers coming from EC-countries	7
4	questions concerning the training and further training methods on national and non-national level	4
5	common training profiles throughout the EC	1
6	classification of foreign workers coming from the EC within the enterprise/determination of the occupation	3
7	classification of salaries and wages of job-seekers coming from EC-member states within the enterprise	3
8	others	2
9	no reply	27
Sum		66

The **relevance** and the **degree of usage** of the system of comparability or of some parts of it very much depend on actual mobility in Europe. This can be stated without the foundation of another empirical investigation. By the nature of their activity, skilled workers of certain occupational groups are more "mobile" or more fond of mobility than others (e.g jobs in the tourism sector). In other branches of industry a shortage of skilled workers or a strong demand result in an increased mobility which also goes beyond the borders of national labour markets. The results of the enquiry confirm this concentration on some individual occupational groups.

Question 8
Which of the 19 actually worked-out occupational fields are the most demanded by the workers or employers?

Sector/Occupational field	worker's demand high	employer's demand high
1. Hotel and catering industry	22	13
2. Motor-vehicle repair	4	2
3. Construction	18	14
4. Electrical/Electronics	12	9
5. Agriculture	3	6
6. Textile/Clothing	7	3
7. Metal working	7	2
8. Textile industry	3	4
9. Trading	12	11
10. Administrations, Banks and Insurances	16	9
11. Chemical industry	9	5
12. Food industry	8	9
13. Tourist industry	17	10
14. Transport/Communication	10	8
15. Underground workings	4	1
16. Steel/Metal industry	1	1
17. Printing industry/Media	5	4
18. Leather industry	-	2
19. Lumber industry	1	1
TOTAL	159	114

The requests for information about certain occupational fields focus on:

Ranking	Workers	Employers
1	Hotel and catering industry	Construction
2	Construction	Hotel and catering industry
3	Tourist industry	Trading
4	Administrations	Tourist industry

Against this background, considerations to limit (and perhaps to further differentiate its contents) information systems such as the system of comparability or multilingual documents on fields of occupation to those occupational groups who are known or expected to show an above-average degree of mobility are justified.

With regard to the **contents** of questions the results of the enquiry indicate that workers and employers are primarily interested in getting some information on

- the kind and level of **certificates**, diplomas or school reports and
- a description of activities, required skills and **practical requirements** for the occupation in question.

Workers tend to show a greater interest in information about the training courses and the length of training.

Question 10

In relation to the comparability system which are the most or less demanded target fields by the employers or workers? (Column a); W = worker, E = employer)
Which of these target fields are well or poorly covered by the information material on the comparability system of vocational guidance or where are they missing? (Column b)
(Please cross the corresponding answer)

Topics	a) demand		b) information material		
	high		sufficiant	poor	missing
	E	W			
Community name of the occupation/national designation for the occupation	6	13	13	6	1
Description of the general area of activities for the occupation in question	7	11	13	7	1
Descritption of the activities, skill and practical requirements for the occupation in question	11	14	10	10	1
Information about the vocational training requirements (type and level of the training, i.e: in a school or in an enterprise, low- or high-level; training institutions)	8	11	8	11	2
Preliminary educational requirements for each vocational training in question	4	10	4	11	3
Lenght of the training	6	13	9	6	4
Type and level of certificates, diplomas and qualifications	11	18	10	10	1
Organizations entitled to award certificates	4	8	8	9	2
Others, these are: 1._____	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	57	98	75	70	15

There is a relatively large number of Euroadvisers questioned who feel that the questions they are most often asked in practice are poorly covered or not answered at all by the available material (85 out of 160 answers). They see a lack of detailed information about

- the **school education** required for a particular course and about the **training course** itself and

- the description of **practical requirements** for the individual occupations. This criticism is also voiced by many of the experts of the countries concerned.

Reports by **workers** and **employers** about the suitability, comprehensiveness, correctness and current relevance of the information material about the system of comparability is practically non-existent (two cases).

Question 12:
Are there any remarks made by the utilisers such as workers and employers as regards suitability, completeness, correctness and actuality of the information material of the comparability for vocational training qualifications?

Reply	absolute
yes	2
no	36
no reply	15
Sum	53

A direct statement relating to the evaluation of the system of comparability by the originally targeted "end-users" is therefore not possible.

However, there is no doubt that Euroadvisers use this system in practice as an important source of information, in addition to other sources.

Question 13:
Do you use other types of information material for your counselling/placement activities in relationship with the mobility of workers within the EC?

Reply	absolute
yes	53
no	25
no reply	11
Sum	89

Finally, the Euroadvisers were asked which occupational groups they feel will require more information in the context of a European mobility of workers. There was a broad range of answers, listing in particular, in addition to the sectors of priority mentioned above (tourism, construction, Horeca), **graduate occupations** which is a field that is not covered by the system of comparability. Numerous answers referred to **nursing and other occupations in the health sector** and to **service occupations** in the field of trade, banking and insurances. It remains open as to how the increased need for information about these fields of occupation can be met.

3 Concluding remarks

It was not the task of this expertise to carry out a comprehensive evaluation of the **overall use** of the system of comparability but to answer the question to what extent the system is actually used in practice by workers and employers.

Undoubtedly, the "system of comparability of vocational training qualifications set up by CEDEFOP is an important contribution to an increased transparency of vocational training qualifications in the European Union and thus to the mobility of workers in the Community.[10]

The majority of statements and questionnaire results received to date, however, indicate that the **level of usage** by the originally targeted groups, i.e. workers and companies has remained small - apart from some exceptions (the UK and Spain, under certain circumstances). With this in mind an **expansion** of the system to include other professional groups is discouraged by practically all those interviewed.

Nevertheless, this result must in our opinion be relativized: the system of comparability in its existing form, which is certainly capable of being improved in detail, is in principle an **"expert system"** and as such has doubtless a potentially high **indirect use**, as the results of the survey of the Euro Advisers show.

Measured against the originally formulated main aims of

1. contributing to the free movement of skilled workers within the Community,
2. being used by workers and
3. being used by employers

the system can make a valid contribution to aim 1.

The **direct advantage** for workers and employers remains questionable, even if improvements of certain details were to be made. The assessor entirely endorses the statement by Denmark: "We think that the only way to facilitate mobility is to let the individual be carrier of information about his own qualifications, i.e. documentations/education and training certificates, about the national education system supplemented by an individual C.V. (portfolio)."

The information of interest to **employers** is primarily not a formal comparison of vocational training qualifications but information concerning vocational experience or qualifications obtained for instance in the course of further education.

But this statement must also be placed within a practical context of mobility within the Community: for employment agencies, labour advisers, careers advisers, who act as promoters of mobility and catalysts between companies and workers, the system of comparability can be a helpful auxiliary instrument for practical work.

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10 Cf. CEDEFOP Flash 3/93, p.3

The main conclusion of this expertise is thus: not the form and technical details of the system of comparability have to be discussed, but rather its function in the context with other sources of information (in particular data bases) and other aids given to workers and employers to facilitate mobility in the Community.

CEDEFOP - European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

Use of the system of comparability of vocational training qualifications by employers and workers
isoplan
Institut für Entwicklungsforschung, Wirtschaft- und Sozialplanung GmbH
Saarbrücken, Brussels, Potsdam

CEDEFOP panorama

Berlin: CEDEFOP - European Centre for the
Development of Vocational Training, 1994

1994 - 44 pp. - 21,0 x 29,7 cm

DE, EN, FR

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panorama

CEDEFOP

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In agreement with the European Commission, CEDEFOP commissioned the ISOPLAN institute in mid-1993 to investigate the effective use of the "comparability of vocational training qualifications" system which had been coordinated by CEDEFOP from 1986 to 1993 on the basis of Council ruling 368/85/EEC and under the charge of the Human Resources, Education, Vocational Training and Youth task force (department of the European Commission).

This investigation was to supplement the evaluation undertaken by the Member States and the Commission in the course of 1991 and if need be to update it, in particular in view of the fact that at the time

- results were only available on a limited number of vocational groups, i.e. 8 of the 19 sectors which were covered by the end of 1993, and
- questioning of the direct users, i.e. of enterprises and workers, had only been possible in part in certain individual cases.

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